

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

We claim:

Claims 1-22 (Cancelled)

23. (Currently amended) A method for forming splines on a metallic tube, comprising the steps of:

(a) forming a metallic tube of an aluminum alloy composed of 2XXX, 6XXX or 7XXX series;

(b) solution heat-treating said metallic tube;

(c) controlling time and/or temperature exposure conditions of said metallic tube so that a T4 temper is not achieved, wherein controlling time and/or temperature condition includes cooling said metallic tube by at least 5°C below room temperature to retard natural aging;

(d) forming splines on said metallic tube before said metallic tube has aged sufficiently to develop properties corresponding to a T4 temper by forming said splines within about 12 hours after completion of step (b) and said metallic tubes are stored at room temperature or less; and

(e) aging said metallic tube.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23 wherein the aluminum alloy is composed of

6013, 6061, 6063, 7003, 7108 or 7029.

26. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (a) includes extruding a tube.

27. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (a) includes drawing a seamless tube.

28. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which (a) includes forming a tube from an elongated sheet product that is rolled in a circular configuration and then welded to form a tube.

29. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (a) includes solution heat treating the tubes by a direct quench process from an elevated hot working process or by separate solution heat treating.

30. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which steps (b) and (c) include cooling said metallic tube to room temperature.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (d) includes forming said splines within about 8 hours after completion of step (b) and said metallic tubes are stored at room temperature.

34. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (d) includes forming said splines by use of a cold forming process.

35. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (e) includes naturally aging said tube to full/stable T4 conditions.

36. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (d) includes artificially aging said tube to full/stable T6 conditions.

37. (Original) The method of claim 23 in which step (d) includes artificially aging said tube at a temperature of at lease about 300° F for about 4 hours.

38. (Original) The method of claim 23 which further comprises hardening of said splines by use of an anodizing process.

39. (Original) The method of claim 23 which further comprises anodizing said splines with a hardening material having a thickness of at lease about 0.002 inches.